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THE BAPTIST Record

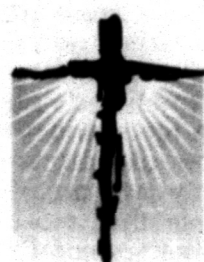
JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION

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MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS

Miss. Baptist Beginnings is dedicated

By William H. Perkins Jr.
Editor

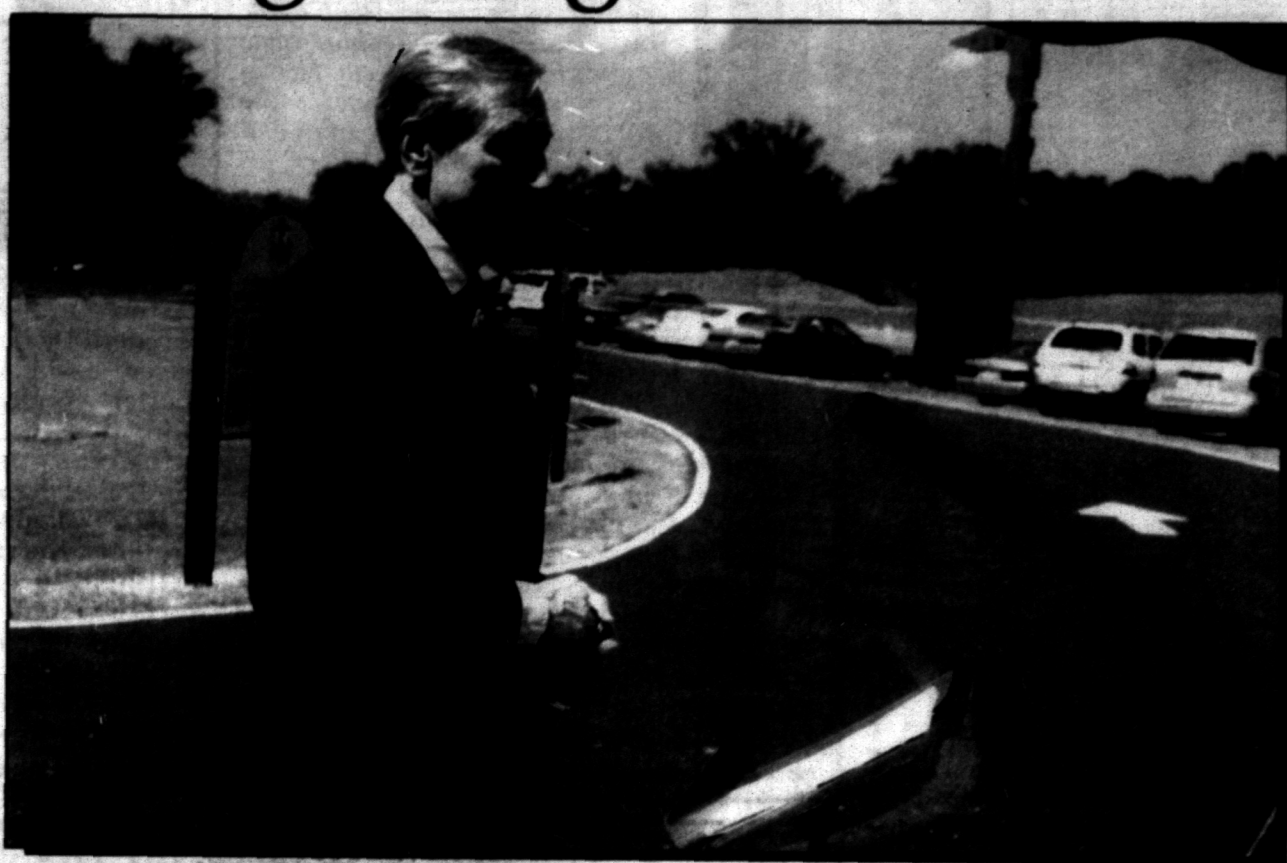
"It's a great privilege to join in praising our Lord for what He has done through Mississippi Baptists," said Ken Cook, president of the Mississippi Baptist Historical Commission, on the occasion of the May 30 dedication of the new Mississippi Baptist Beginnings historical exhibit on Highway 61 near Fayette.

"This exhibit beautifully illustrates and commemorates the resourcefulness, the loyalty, the devotion, and the courage of Mississippi Baptists," he said. "We honor the memory of our valiant ancestors who labored long and hard in every way they could to establish, nurture, and build churches."

The historical exhibit is a circular driveway with 17 large, weather-resistant plaques placed at intervals around the circle. The exhibit is punctuated with a 30-foot cross that can be seen for great distances by vehicles approaching the exhibit along Highway 61, one of Mississippi's busiest highways.

The exhibit begins with a welcome plaque and ends with a plaque that contains an invitation to become a Christian. In between those plaques are plaques entitled:

- Baptist Churches Constituted After Territory Acquired by U.S.A.
 - Beginning of the First Baptist Church in Mississippi.
 - Organization of Baptist Churches in Mississippi.
 - Richard Curtis Jr. (first Baptist preacher in Mississippi).
 - Woodville Baptist Church (first organized and still active church).
 - Ebenezer Baptist Church (longest uninterrupted ministry).
 - Mississippi College.
 - Blue Mountain College.
 - William Carey University.
 - The Baptist Children's Village.
 - Mississippi Fertile Ground for Leadership Development.
 - Conference Ministries.
 - Mississippi Baptist Health Systems, Inc.
 - The Baptist Record.
 - Baptist Building.
- "People ask why the historical exhibit is located here. [The answer is because] this is where Mississippi Baptists started," explained Jim



HISTORICAL MOMENT — Ken Cook, chairman of the Mississippi Baptist Historical Commission, speaks May 30 at the dedication of the Mississippi Baptist Beginnings historical exhibit on Highway 61 south of Fayette. The circular exhibit, located a short distance from the site of the first Baptist church in the state, spans the history of Baptists in Mississippi and features 17 plaques as well as parking for buses. Behind Cook to the right is the thirty-foot cross that beckons travelers to visit the exhibit. (Photo by Tony Martin)

Futral, executive director-treasurer of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, citing the formation of Salem Church, also known as Cole's Creek Church, by seven hardy Baptists in 1791 almost within sight of the present day exhibit.

"The character and the DNA of those people flows through us," Futral said. In those early days, "even the civil and religious authorities were against them. With great courage, they kept serving the Lord," he said.

"This is not about just Mississippi Baptists," Futral continued, "but Jesus at work among some folks in Mississippi. Every one of these panels, and more panels that could be added, tell the story that God has been at work."

Edward McMillan, longtime executive secretary of the Mississippi Baptist Historical Commission, told the crowd that planning began for the new exhibit in 1993, when the Mississippi Department of Transportation announced that Highway 61 would be widened.

The significance of that road work, McMillan said, was that the increased right-of-way for the project would swallow the small Baptist historical exhibit of the time, known as the Boyd Shelter.

After being formally notified by state transportation officials of the widening plans, the quest for a new historical exhibit site was begun in earnest in 1998. Property was acquired the following year, McMillan

said, and site preparation was started.

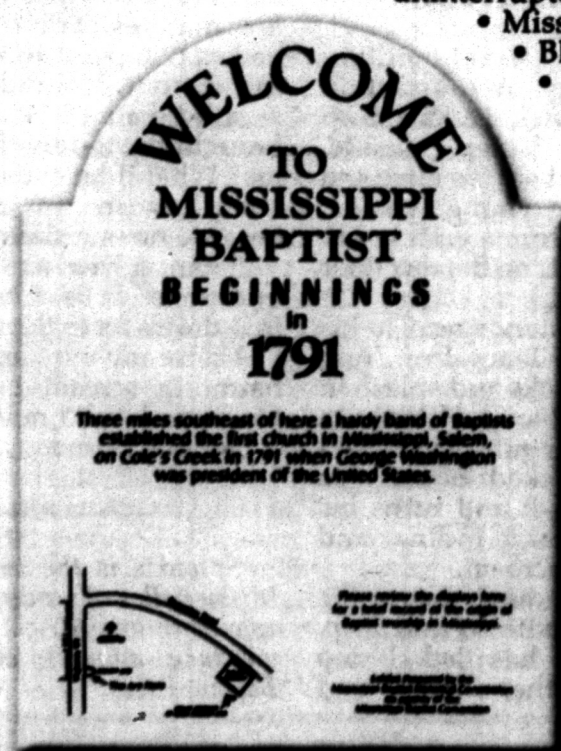
Design and construction took several years, and the result is the new, spacious historical exhibit located along Highway 61, according to McMillan.

Futral paid homage to McMillan's doggedness in bringing the exhibit to completion over ten years, including his winding journey through state bureaucracy to discover where the Mississippi Department of Transportation had stored the Boyd Shelter materials.

"No individual has been more significant than Edward McMillan," in making the historical exhibit a reality for Mississippi Baptists, Futral said. On behalf of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, Futral presented McMillan with a framed reproduction of the exhibit's 17 plaques and 30-foot cross.

Citing the Mississippi Baptist giants of past generations and their faithfulness, Futral said, "Jesus will stay at work among His people. The question that I have for you today is, 'Lord, what would you have me do?'"

The Mississippi Baptist Beginnings historical exhibit is located on the east side of Highway 61, a few miles south of Fayette. It is open during daylight hours and there is no admission charge. There is a special space for bus parking. To view a video of the exhibit and read each of the plaques, visit www.mbc.org.





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A little honesty, please

Gambling has wrought many changes in Mississippi since it was legalized in 1992, but did you know that it has created employment for everyone in Tunica County and put a pickup in every driveway? That's what the mayor of Biloxi apparently believes.

According to the May 14 edition of BaldwinCountyNow.com, a web site that covers south Alabama news, Biloxi Mayor A.J. Holloway addressed the recent Southern Gaming Summit in his fair city and said the following:

"[Legalized gambling] has been a big boom for Mississippi... [Tunica County] was the Sugar Ditch of the United States before casinos came in, and they have a new pickup truck at every house now... The casinos came and everybody in and around Tunica got a job..."

Well. That's quite a mouthful, even for a reliable gambling apologist like Holloway. The problem is, Holloway's hyperbolic statements are untrue at best and intellectually dishonest at worst.

Rob Chambers, a consultant for the Mississippi Baptist Christian Action Commission in Jackson, was intrigued by Holloway's pronouncements on the Tunica County economic "boom."

"I find this perplexing, near mathematically improbable, and even contradictory to the facts," Chambers said. "How can it be that everyone in Tunica has a new truck and has a job when Tunica unemployment rates have been hovering around 12 percent the last few months?"

THE EVE OF DISASTER



"I gather that he presupposed that casino gambling creates a positive environment by creating more jobs and state-based assistance that will result in a 'better' community. That begs the question, does the evidence show that the infusion of money has indeed made Tunica a better community?"

A modicum of research by Chambers provided the stark answer to his question. "With little variance in population for Tunica County over the last 18 years, the number of violent crimes reported in Tunica County went from four violent crimes in 1980 (12 years before casino gambling) to an average of 83 per year or

an increase of 2,075% each year from 2001-2005," Chambers said.

"In 1980, when unemployment averaged 11.7%, there were six property crimes reported. From 2001-2005, when unemployment averaged eight percent, there was an average of 619 non-violent crimes reported per year for an average annual increase of over 10,000%," he pointed out.

"Even if it were true that that people in Tunica County have more jobs and money, it does not follow that casino gambling has made Tunica a better community. The statistics... speak for themselves regardless of what pro-gambling politicians say," Chambers concluded.

Time after time, from the Governor's Mansion to state legislators to the occupants of city hall, far too many Mississippi politicians have consistently deceived us about the economic wonders of legalized gambling. Holloway is merely the latest in that long line.

While lives are ruined, families shattered, and careers and reputations destroyed daily by the scourge of legalized gambling, we get the same pabulum from our politicians. First, we were promised that legalized alcohol would solve all our economic problems, then gambling was to be our salvation. As public schools struggle to meet their budgets and the state Medicaid system faces disastrous cuts in services (to name only two areas among many) it is inarguable that most of the promised miracles have not come to pass, regardless of what the politicians say.

When it comes to the cold, hard realities of gambling in Mississippi, a little honesty is apparently too much to ask of our leaders.

GUEST OPINION:

The scream

By Sue Sprenkle,
International Mission Board

I step over makeshift barricades, walk through the black tar smoke of burning tires, and jump over open sewage. Rioting youths run past, raising their pangas (machetes) and rungas (clubs) to the sky in triumph. They want their picture taken, and strike a pose reminiscent of conquering heroes. I ignore them. I am focused on finding the source of the heart-wrenching sound.

I am closer, but run into another group of youths looting and pulling apart meager slum dwellings. It's not difficult. Walls of thin, corrugated metal are knocked over with a couple blows. They tire of this and set the homes on fire. There's dancing and singing and celebration.

The scream gets louder and more intense. I cover my ears. I don't want to go on. Something inside me warns against finding the source of this sound, but it pierces my soul. I continue on.

Feet sprawl from the door of a smoking, tattered shack. An older youth ahead on the path looks at me. He smirks, then kisses a bloody panga before raising it in the air. I know what just happened.

Another blood-curdling scream brings my attention back to the shack. I take a deep breath and step inside. Someone must still be alive. On the floor is a young woman. Blood oozes from a gash in her head and pools on the dirt floor around her.

A toddler stands next to his dead mother. Tears drop from his round cheeks and splash in his mother's blood. He runs to the only chair not overturned in the ransacked house. He crawls up on it and turns his back to me as if hiding, and continues to scream.

I look up and down the smoke-filled path to find help, but everyone has fled. I step over the mother's body and

into the blood. The closer I get to the toddler, the louder he screams. I know I scare him, but I have to get him to safety. I pick him up. He kicks and hits me. He screams in my ear.

It's the scream that drew me here.

Months later, the toddler's cry and other sounds of terror still haunt my sleep. I wake up wondering what happened to him. I wonder if he still sees the attacker as I do when my eyes are closed. I wonder if he survived the internally displaced persons (IDP) camp to which I took him.

My mind constantly plays the "what if" game. What if I had followed the sound just a few minutes earlier? What if I had not stopped to take a picture en route? Would the mother still be alive? What if I had brought the toddler home with me? What if he ends up on the street or in an orphanage because no one claims him?

I can never answer these questions. It is Christ's love that draws us to these things.

I close my eyes and hear his haunting scream once again. On some level, I never want to forget that sound.

Sprenkle is the International Mission Board's overseas correspondent for Africa. Her commentary appears courtesy of Baptist Press.

Zimbabwe relief supplies reaching poor

BULAWAYO, Zimbabwe (BP) — Boxes of desperately needed food are reaching families in Zimbabwe suffering through that country's food crisis, and the Southern Baptist and Zimbabwean Baptist partners delivering the food are hearing heartfelt expressions of deep gratitude.

Southern Baptists were asked to pray in mid-May that customs and duty charges on the food would be minimal. Increases in those costs had created concern about getting the parcels into the country.

Within days, however, Zimbabwe's government announced a 90-day suspension of duty charges on imported basic goods.

"I was very concerned that the new rules would cost us about an additional \$75,000 to get this shipment in, but God has proven His involvement in this project once again through these new customs rules," said Mark Hatfield, who leads work in Sub-Saharan Africa for Baptist Global Response, a Southern Baptist international relief and development organization. "Your prayers have made a difference!"

Two shipments totaling about 1,000 boxes were delivered in the country early in 2008, and another 850 boxes arrived in mid-May. Another shipment of 1,550 food parcels departed Johannesburg, South Africa, for the Zimbabwe border May 26.

The food boxes, which contain about 50 pounds of food staples, will feed a family of six for one week at a cost of about \$80.

Political uncertainty and economic turmoil — including the world's highest inflation rate — are making daily life virtually impossible for Zimbabwe's poorest people, about one-third of whom are receiving emergency food aid. The situation has been



IN JESUS' NAME — Southern Baptists continue to provide relief for people around the globe, as natural disasters claim hundreds of thousands of lives. Contributions to the Southern Baptist World Hunger and General Relief funds through the IMB have made these efforts possible. (IMB photo)

compounded even further by flooding that wiped out crops in many parts of the country early this year, followed by three months of extremely dry weather that caused serious damage to this year's harvest.

When the Baptist Union of Zimbabwe and the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe delivered one batch of food parcels that arrived in mid-May in conjunction with the Southern Baptist mission in that country, they were deeply moved by the reaction of those who received the boxes, according to one of the workers who helped with the deliveries.

"These packages are being delivered to the elderly who have little income, as well as the destitute among our communities," the worker wrote. "They are also being given to our Baptist pastors

who struggle to make ends meet.

"The people we delivered the packages to today were overwhelmed with gratitude. Some of the elderly wept and thanked us, saying that they had been praying for food and now God had provided it," the worker reported. "They were amazed that Baptists in the U.S. cared enough to send them food when their own countrymen don't seem to care that they are starving."

The plight of Zimbabwe's poor is almost beyond imagining, the worker wrote. "Most people in Zimbabwe are eating one meal about every other day," he said. "People who live in rural central Zimbabwe have stopped coming to church and traveling to visit neighbors because they have no food and no energy to walk."

The Southern Baptist team in Zimbabwe calculated that if the items in the food boxes could be obtained at the grocery store, they would cost about 30 times what an average worker makes in a month. Unemployment in the country is running at about 80%.

"If a person worked for a

year and spent all their money on food, they still couldn't purchase what was in this box," the worker wrote.

To date, Southern Baptists have provided nearly \$500,000 for the Zimbabwe crisis. Besides the food box project, Baptist Global Response purchased \$40,000 worth of essential medicines for Sanyati Baptist Hospital and funded a project to distribute school supplies to 25,000 of the most needy students.

Southern Baptists also are helping provide maize for a church-related orphanage in southeastern Zimbabwe that is home to 50 children.

"Many people think God has forgotten them, but when the church brings them food it is a reminder that God is still there for them," Hatfield said. "People say, 'No one else seems to care what happens to me.' It's a marvelous opportunity to connect people who care with people in need."

For more information on international relief projects, go to www.imb.org and click on the human needs ministries link at the "Give" page or call (800) 999-3113.

Looking back

10 years ago

Southern Baptist Convention messengers vote to refer to the executive committee a June 9 motion asking, "in light of the Disney boycott," that efforts be made to move the 2000 site of the annual meeting from Orlando to New York City.

20 years ago

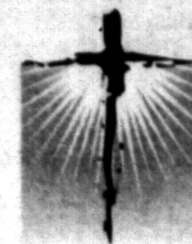
With only a 692-vote majority, Jerry Vines is elected president of the Southern Baptist Convention over Richard Jackson, assuring the continuation of the Conservative Resurgence in the convention. More than 31,000 votes were cast in the presidential election.

30 years ago

In an unprecedented action in the 99-year history of Southern Seminary, Louisville, Ky., 13 theological professors are dismissed by the board of trustees.

Myanmar, China aided

RICHMOND, Va. (BP) — Southern Baptists continue to provide relief in Myanmar and China following catastrophic disasters in the two Asian countries in May. Contributions to the Southern Baptist World Hunger and General Relief funds have made these efforts possible. More than 130,000 people died or are missing in Myanmar after a cyclone ripped through the country May 2. An earthquake shook China's Sichuan province a few days later, killing more than 70,000. Millions in both countries have been left homeless. Despite restrictions in both countries, the International Mission Board has provided \$600,000 in relief funds. These funds supplied food, water filters and purification systems, sanitation systems, building materials and health care. More gifts to these funds are needed to continue this work around the world. World Hunger funds received through the IMB are used to meet food-related needs — assisting people with receiving food, buying food and growing food. General Relief funds provide shelter, clothing, construction materials and transportation. Southern Baptists have a long history of responding to those whose lives have been impacted by natural disasters, poverty, famine, wars, and other struggles. One of the more notable responses followed the deadly tsunami that hit the southern Asia region in December 2004, killing more than 230,000 people and leaving millions homeless. Southern Baptists gave more than \$17 million to relief efforts that provided food, shelter and various projects designed to improve quality of life. For more information on international relief projects, go to www.imb.org and click on the human needs ministries link at the "Give" page or call (800) 999-3113.



MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS

THE SECOND FRONT PAGE

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YOU CAN RESPOND
RIGHT NOW!

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

Bibliocipher

By Charles Marx, 1932 - 2004
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FRAD NA QBA KTQAW,
QBTQ QBA OZKBQAF-
SW DTQZFD GBZMB
IAARAQB QBA QOSQB
JTN ADQAO ZD.

ZWTZTB QGADQN-

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Clue: N=Y

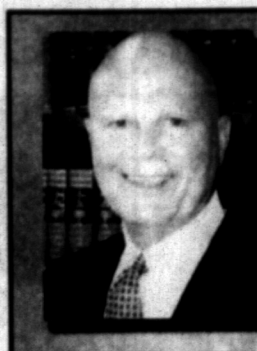
Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Second Peter Two Nine

DEALING WITH VARIABLE SPEEDS

It was a beautiful spring Saturday morning and I was on my way to a speaking engagement. I left home before 8 a.m. knowing that I had plenty of time to get where I was supposed to be by mid-morning and was looking forward to a delightful drive north on the Natchez Trace. The day was progressing fine until I got on the Trace, at which time I was confronted with the dilemma of what to do now. Bicycle riders were out on the Trace, which is not unusual at all and especially on a Saturday or Sunday morning, but the further I went the more of them there were, and I realized that there was a race in progress. There were official vehicles, city police, and park rangers who were helping everyone avoid a collision with each other. My drive up the Trace, which normally would be kept around the 50 mph mark, had been reduced to about 10 mph as I tried to weave in and out and get around the bicycle racers. I would get around five to 10 of them only to quickly brake and be behind another five to 10 of them. I did not know it at first but I became increasingly aware of the fact that there were hundreds of bikers in the race. They were strung out over miles and miles of the Natchez Trace. There is a great deal of difference between 50 mph and 10 mph. After about 40 or 50 minutes, I realized that I was not going to get to my speaking engagement on time. At that point there was nothing that I could do except keep on trying to get around the racers while keeping my patience up and my blood pressure down.

I arrived at my destination in about two and a half hours when, in fact, the trip was supposed to be about an hour and a half. The extra hour was compounded by the emotional, mental, and physical drain of all of the frustration of trying to get there through all of the slow moving people around me. For those of you who may be wondering what in the world this has to do with anything related to the church, the Lord, or our walk with Jesus, I might just pause and suggest to you that it has everything to do with a lot of our churches, pastors, and people and what we are trying to do in the Kingdom of God.

How is that so? Well, think about it. We are all moving on the same road. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus talked about people who got on the broad road that leads to destruction but also talked about that on the other side of the equation there is a straight gate and a narrow way that the people of God can travel. If you know the Lord, that is the pathway you have chosen and fol-



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

lowing that path may not seem like an eight-lane interstate stretch of highway, but rather more like traveling the Natchez Trace. Surely, from time to time all of us kind of look around in the area where we are traveling and see the other folks who have gotten on the road with us. Some are young, some are old, some are rather energetic, and others somewhat lethargic. Some seem to be in a hurry to get everything done and others seem to be content with going very slowly. Some seem to be more gifted and others seem to be more needy. All of us are traveling the same road. It is a fellowship of believers called the church and I can assure you that whether it is Saturday morning or Wednesday night, Sunday morning or evening, it is always a fascinating experience as you look around and see the fellow travelers on the road near you.

That brings up the issue of variable speeds. Whether you have noticed it or not virtually everybody is traveling at a different pace and that includes you. Depending on where you are going and how you are trying to get there, at times you may be hollering, "Come on and let's go faster or you folks slow down." One of the most difficult things for me to deal with as a pastor was the variable speeds of folks in the congregation. There always seemed to be some people who were harnessed up and ready to go charging into the future wide open and full blast, while others were content to pedal slowly keeping an eye out for downhill slopes where they could just coast. Like the bikers on that Saturday morning, the folks with the different speeds seemed to cluster together and travel in a little group. They became rather unconcerned or oblivious to the other groups that were way up front or far in the back. All of them were part of the race, but they seemed to have more of an attachment to the folks that traveled at their speed.

Now when it comes to the church and the variable speeds at which people travel, it is always an issue that pastors and leaders have to deal with because there will be those folks who will say, "We need to slow down! Our church is moving in a direction too fast." There will probably be an equal number of folks who may be just as vocal and just as passionate saying, "We need to

go faster than we are going." There is urgency and a push to get things done that drives them. There may have been something, but I cannot remember an issue, a program, a building, or a direction for the church that there were not people who dealt with it at variable speeds.

That highlights another issue. Is it possible to get anything done? Is there any way to get the people of God together on the same page while traveling on the same road and accomplishing a common task? How do you go about leading a group that may be strung out over a 50-mile stretch of road? May I suggest to you that it is not necessarily unspiritual or ungodly for people to be traveling at different speeds. It may not be conducive to easy management and it may be frustrating at times, but we should give folks a break and allow them the privilege of traveling at their speed in the race of faith.

Another thing to keep in mind is that we are all moving toward the same goal. As the writer of Hebrews tells us we are, "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our

faith..." (Heb. 12:2). Because I was in a car, I was traveling a lot faster than most of the folks on that Saturday morning. However, it was interesting to watch as there were so many different levels of ability, training, and strength or at least that was the way it appeared to me. Some folks seemed to be in better shape than other folks were. Some seemed to have greater ability than others did.

It occurred to me that the speed with which you travel on the road does not necessarily make you a better or worse person than the other folks. It could mean that you just were given better genes and greater opportunity than some of the others. It may be that some of the slower moving folks were working harder and really had given more dedication to the racing event than some of the faster, flashy folks in the race. Regardless, all of them were moving toward the same finish line, and so are we.

The fulfillment of what God wants to do in and through me comes to rest in the person of Jesus Christ and my following Him. I do not want to get in other people's way and I want to travel as fast and as far as I can for Him. However, the speed at which other people travel, whether fast or slow, does not indicate or determine my faithfulness in the journey. So today load up, and let's go. Do what you can as best you can for the glory of Jesus and see what the Lord will do through you.

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SBC magazine tackles child sexual abuse in churches

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — The June/July issue of SBC Life features an eight-page pull-out special report on child sexual abuse aimed at urging churches to take steps in protecting children from sexual predators and assisting them in doing so.

The section consists of seven stories, including a heartbreaking testimony from a woman who was sexually abused as a child, a testimony from a former social worker who worked on child abuse cases, and an article from the co-founder of a ministry that seeks to educate churches about the problem.

In addition, the special report titled, *Protecting Our Children: Accepting the Responsibility, Embracing the Privilege*, includes practical advice for churches and church members on how to prevent sexual abuse within their congregations and what to do if it does occur.

The special report amplifies resources already available, including one at www.sbc.net/localchurches/ministry-help.asp that includes a list of ways to prevent child sexual abuse.

Studies show that between 25-33% of girls and five percent to 15% of boys will be sexually abused by the age of 18 — the majority of them abused by family members or trusted family friends, the special report says.

The special report can be viewed online at www.SBCLife.net or www.SBC.net, and ordered by calling 866-722-5433. Also, copies of the special report are included as a pull-out section in the June/July issue of SBC Life mailed to every Southern Baptist church. Persons interested in reading the paper copy of the report in SBC Life should contact their church office.

"The Apostle Paul reminded us that followers of Jesus are to cast off deeds of darkness (Romans 13:12), to put on the armor of light (Romans 13:12) and to walk as children of light (Ephesians 5:8)," said Roger S. (Sing) Oldham, executive editor of SBC Life and vice president for convention relations for the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee.

"It is our hope and prayer that this issue of SBC Life will assist our churches in shining the light so that countless numbers of children will be spared the horror of abuse at the hands of a trusted spiritual leader," he said.

The special report consists of:

- The testimony from a woman who was abused, beginning as a 10-year-old, by her father — the church pastor. The abuse continued until she was around age 17. When she finally made public her secret years later, other women in her church came forward to tell stories of how they also had been sexually abused by other men in various churches in the past. Her name was changed in the SBC Life story.

"God will not bless our churches if we do not deal with the sin of these offenders and call for true repentance," she writes. "...Churches are finally starting to address the problem that there are many victims who are hurting and need healing; but too often churches excuse the offender, enabling him to continue in his abuse of others."

- Observations on Isaiah 1:17 ("Seek justice, encourage the oppressed...") and how it relates to the topic of sexual abuse.



SBC LIFE SPECIAL REPORT PROTECTING ACCEPTING THE RESPONSIBILITY, EMBRACING THE PRIVILEGE OUR CHILDREN

"Our Father is still concerned for those who are victims of violence and oppression," writes John Revell, editor of SBC Life. "God still expects the oppressor to be brought to justice. He does not equate forgiveness with the absolute elimination of consequences."

"Yet, if we remain silent in our churches, justifying inactivity with an anemic and truncated reference to 'forgiveness,' our claims of loving and obeying God ring hollow."

- Insights from a woman who worked 10 years as an adult probation officer dealing directly with sexual abuse cases. The writer, Janice LaRoy, is currently an office and editorial assistant in the SBC Executive Committee's office of convention relations.

"[W]e must recognize that the problem is real, not just 'out there' but even in our churches," LaRoy writes. "I faced this reality one day at the probation office when, much to my surprise, a man who had just received felony probation for sexual abuse of a minor walked in and he was from my own church! ...I wish this were the only case I had encountered involving members of evangelical churches, but it wasn't."

- An article by Dale Ingraham, co-founder of Speaking the Truth in Love Ministries, examining Jude 4 and its warning against evil in the church and urging churches to deal with sexual predators in their midst. Ingraham and his wife, Faith, co-founded the ministry to address the sin of sexual abuse in the body of Christ.

"Tragically, when we deny the sin, it enables offenders to continue in their sin and further intimidates victims into not speaking up. They fear no one will believe them," Ingraham writes. "...We must humble ourselves and admit there is a problem, which means that we no longer deny, excuse, or minimize the sin."

- An article by Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission in Nashville, examining the plight of abused children from the perspective of a commitment to the sanctity of human life.

"It is paramount that the body of Christ do all it can to protect these little ones, from insuring that the church and all her ministries are a place of comfort and safety to reaching out to new moms and dads who are — more often than not — suddenly overwhelmed by the chal-

lenges of parenthood," Land writes. "A church that allows any child to be harmed through negligence or neglect soils its witness in the community and brings public disrepute to God."

- An article examining appropriate steps for screening prospective staff and volunteers. It was written by Joe Langford, president & CEO of Florida-based Edge Information Management, Inc., a national provider of background screening and drug testing for employers.

"When it comes to protecting the lives and safety of our children, aren't these steps reasonable?" he asks at the end of his article. "If taking these steps can help prevent our children from being exposed to the unimaginable, isn't it worth the extra effort?"

- An article by SBC general counsel James P. Guenther looking at the steps and procedures a church should follow if an incident of child abuse is discovered.

"While it is vitally important to the victim that reports be made, it is also important to the church and to its witness," Guenther writes. "Failure to report a crime ends up hurting all parties involved. Believers have a special responsibility to take the right road — the road of obedience both to biblical teaching and the law."

Through the special section, Oldham said, "We wanted the issue to do five things: demonstrate that child sexual abuse is a real problem that faces our churches through testimonies from a victim and a social worker; remind our readers of the biblical commands to promote justice, protect the vulnerable and guard our churches from sinful practices; underscore that we have legal duties to protect the innocent and report the guilty; provide practical steps churches can take to make their ministries as safe as possible for children; and point readers to resources provided by Southern Baptist Convention entities and state conventions."

California court reaffirms homosexual marriage ruling

SAN FRANCISCO (BP) — The California Supreme Court turned back pro-family groups June 4 by refusing to delay its pro-homosexual marriage decision from going into effect, giving the green light for same-sex couples statewide to get "married" June 17.

The 4-3 margin ruling — identical to its earlier decision — came without comment and was a serious blow to social conservatives who had hoped the justices would stay their ruling until citizens consider a proposed constitutional marriage amendment on the November ballot.

Some amendment opponents believe they have a greater chance of defeating the amendment if homosexual marriages already are taking place, a scenario which now will be the case.

Two Christian legal groups, the Alliance Defense Fund and Liberty Counsel, had filed legal briefs requesting the delay.

California now will become the second state, after Massachusetts, to legalize "marriage" between homosexuals. The amendment promoted by the

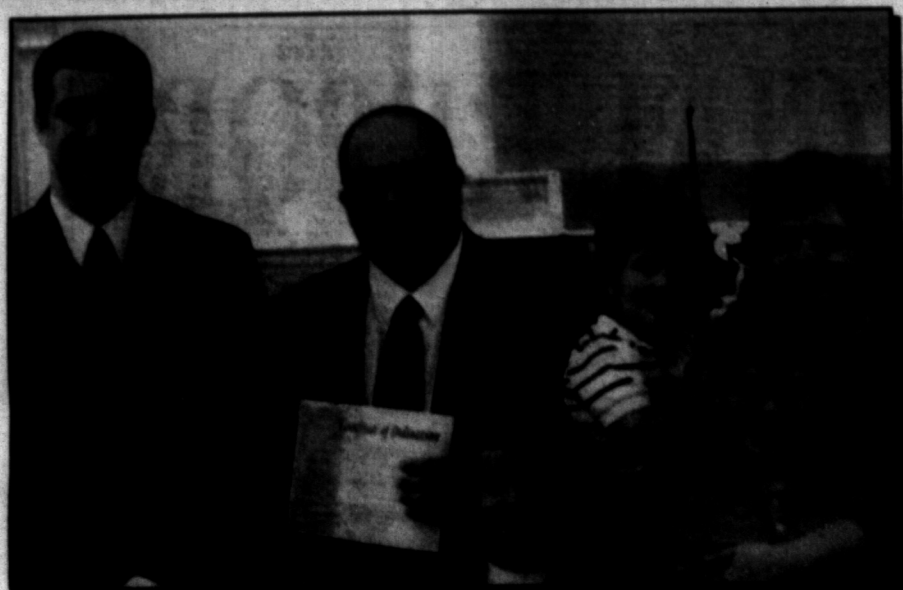
group ProtectMarriage.com would reverse the court's ruling, although there will be some legal debate as to what happens to the licenses if the amendment in fact passes.

Glen Lavy, Alliance Defense Fund senior counsel, said in a news release that the original decision, handed down May 15, was "the most egregious case of judicial activism in modern American history. The refusal to wait for the people to decide by the constitutional process confirms that."

Liberty Counsel's Mathew D. Staver agreed. "Denying a stay in light of the certification of the Marriage Protection Act for the November ballot reveals the political agenda of a handful of judges," Staver said in a news release. "Judges acting as judges and not as legislators would have granted the stay. The battle over marriage is far from over and will not be decided by four judges. The people will decide in November."

For more information about the proposed constitutional marriage amendment in California, visit www.ProtectMarriage.com.

JUST FOR THE RECORD



2. Ainsworth family



3. Van Norman and Whittington



4. First Church, Potts Camp



5. Baby dedication, Calvary Church, Bogue Chitto



1. Highland Church, Natchez, will present Heaven's Gates and Hell's Flames June 15, 6 p.m., and June 16-17, 7 p.m. Free admission; tickets are required and available at (601) 445-0719 or 431-3021.

2. Shady Grove Church, Hazlehurst, ordained Chad Ainsworth to the ministry May 4. He is available for pulpit supply. Shown are the Ainsworths.

3. Enterprise Church, Mississippi Association, ordained Shan Van Norman to the ministry recently. Shown are Van Norman and pastor Ernest Whittington.

4. First Church, Potts Camp, recognized their youngest and oldest mothers May 11. Shown are some of the mothers.

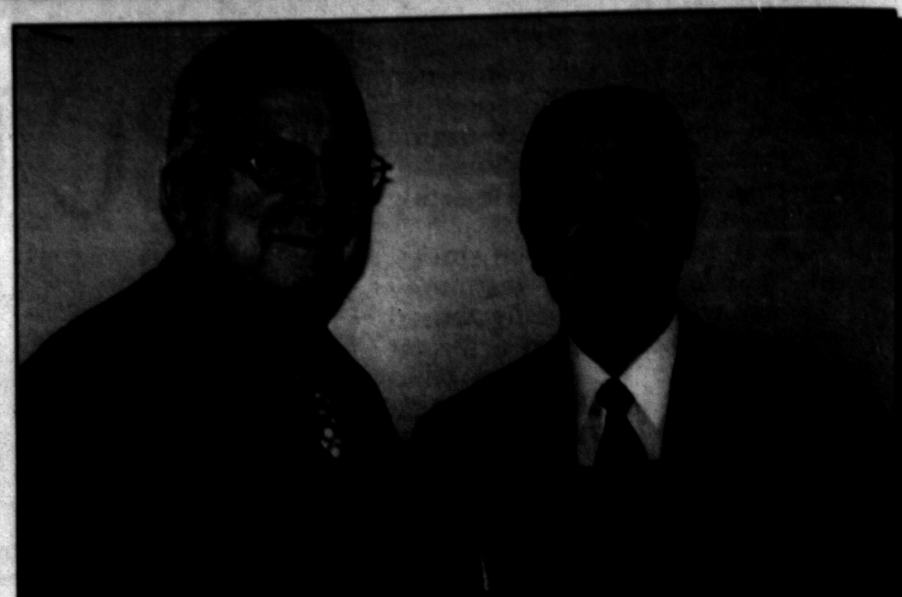
5. Calvary Church, Bogue Chitto, held a baby dedication May 11. Shown are the participants.

6. Northcrest Church, Meridian, recognized Max O. Burris for 25 years of service at the church as minister of worship and/or associate pastor - senior adults May 18. He was recognized in the morning worship service and honored with a reception that evening. Charles Davis, pastor.

7. New Hope Church, Foxworth, dedicated its new pavilion May 17.

8. Thrasher Church, Booneville, recognized its high school graduates May 18. Pastor Dewitt Bain presented each with a Bible. From left, Kaylee Wright, Mallory Johnson, Jesse Hastings, Whitney Cummings, and Zandu Bartram.

9. Edwards Church, Edwards, collected pennies for the Memorial to the Missing at the Baptist Building in Jackson. Shown are wMu director Minnie Cook and pastor John McCall.



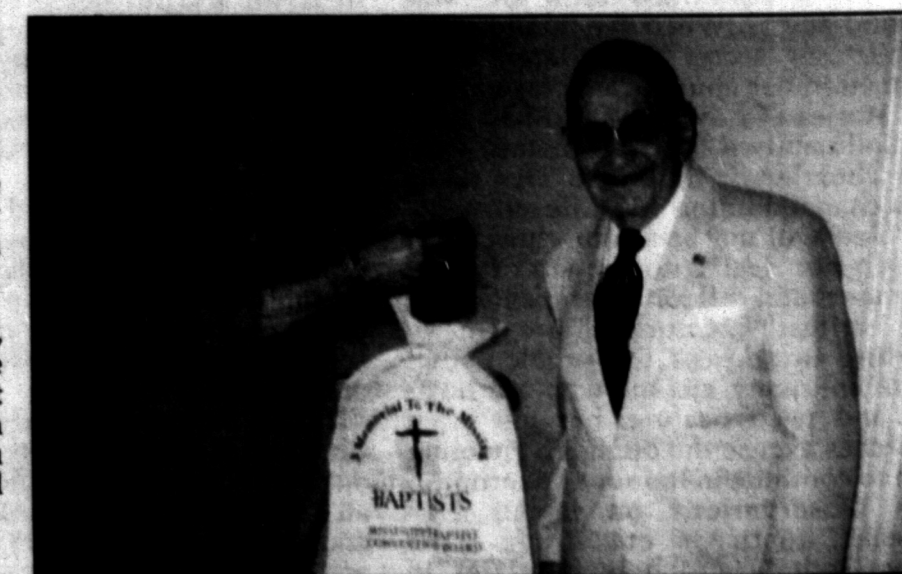
6. Burris recognition, Northcrest Church, Meridian



7. New Hope Church, Foxworth



8. Graduates, Thrasher Church, Booneville



9. Edwards Church, Edwards

JUST FOR THE RECORD



13. Calvary Church, Bogue Chitto



15. First Church, Potts Camp



16. Mississippi Association ESL class



17. Dumas Church, Dumas, graduate recognition

10. The Master's Hands puppet ministry, Tangipahoa Church, Summit, will be performing Come and Praise Him June 22, 6:45 p.m., Tangipahoa Church; July 12, 7 p.m., Eddiceton Church, McCall Creek; July 19, 7 p.m., New Hope Church, Foxworth; Aug. 3, 6 p.m., South McComb Church, McComb; July 27, 6:30 p.m., Bogue Chitto Assembly of God; Aug. 9, 7 p.m., Bala Chitto Church, Magnolia; and Aug. 16, 7 p.m., Mt. Zion Church, Osyka. Call (601) 567-0052, 341-1312, or 341-1314 for information.

11. Stanley D. Stamps, native Mississippian and former IMB missionary, has written Following the Vision, a history of Baptists in Honduras. It is available at Christian book stores, from CrossHouse Publishing, P.O. Box 461592, Garland, TX, 75046, or from Stanley Stamps at 501 North Pleasant St., Hillsboro, TX, 76645, for \$24.95.

12. First Church, Vicksburg, will host a Fourth of July celebration July 6, 3 p.m., featuring the Mid-South U.S. Navy Band, followed by an old-fashioned ice cream social.

13. The GAs of Calvary Church, Bogue Chitto, attended the Missions Madness Day May 17 at First Church, Brookhaven. Shown are the participants.

14. Cedar View Church, Olive Branch, will host The Reeves Family June 21, 6 p.m.

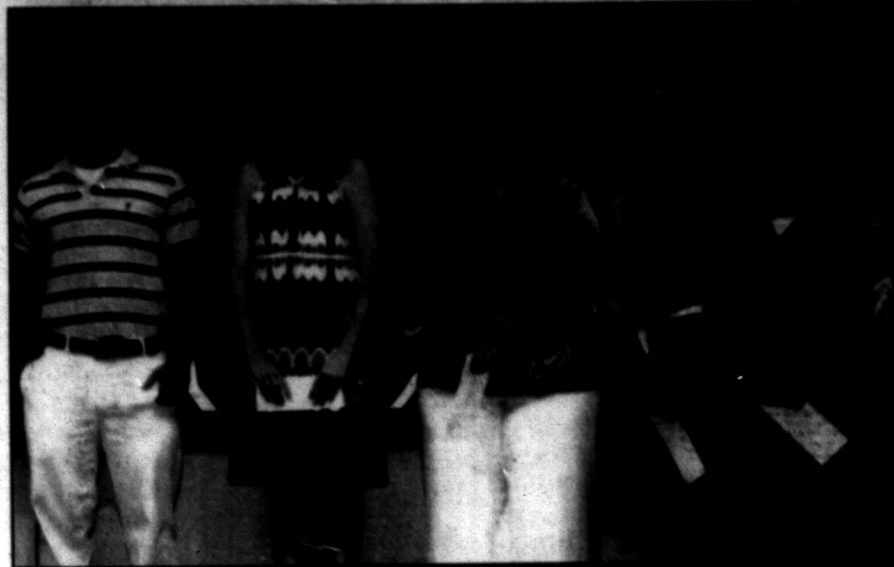
15. First Church, Potts Camp, recognized its high school graduates May 18. Shown are Chelsea Stanton, Brittany Tomlinson, Billy Mitchell, Casey Luther, and Jake Howell.

16. Mississippi Association graduated its first English as a Second Language class May 12. Shown are teacher Linda Sterling and class members.

17. Dumas Church, Dumas, honored its graduates May 4. Shown are the graduates and youth minister Chris Shinall, Scott Hudson, pastor

18. Slayden Church, Slayden, honored their graduates May 18. The Zack Ross Memorial Scholarship was presented to these students: Tyler Sanders, Nealy Jones, Rebecca Kennedy, Michelle Russell, and Megan Walker.

19. Weir Church will host Ann Downingon, a performer on the Gaither Homecoming Videos, on June, 15, at 6 p.m.



18. Slayden Church, Slayden



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REVIVALS AND HOMECOMINGS

1. **Union Church, Sardis:** Revival, June 15 - 19; Sun., 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon. - Thurs., 7 p.m.; Charles Steele, speaker.
2. **Palestine Church, Harrisville:** Homecoming, June 22, 11 a.m., followed by lunch; John Parker, speaker.
3. **Hebron Church, Grenada:** 100th anniversary, June 21 - 22; Sat., 6 p.m., fellowship, food, and music; Sun., services, 10 a.m., followed by potluck lunch; Harold Simmons, speaker; Jimmy Hood, music.
4. **Rock Branch Church, Newton County:** Revival, June 22 - 25, 7 p.m.; Chester Estes, Jr., speaker; Merrill Cassel, music; Danny Chaney, pastor.
5. **New Fellowship Church, Hickory:** Revival, June 22 - 25; Sun., 10:45 a.m. followed by lunch; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; John Davis, speaker; Gary Thorne, music.

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WANTED: PINEVIEW BAPTIST CHURCH, Clinton, MS is seeking individual for part-time interim minister of music or part-time minister of music for blended Worship service. Please send resume to Pineview Baptist Church, 1288 Clinton-Raymond Road, Clinton, MS 39056 or email to Pineviewbc@bellsouth.net. Or fax your resume to 601-924-8378.

FULL-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC. Parkview Baptist Church, Greenville, Miss., is seeking a full-time minister of music. Please send resume to personnel committee, 712 McAllister St., Greenville, MS 38701, or email to parkviewp@bellsouth.net.

FULL-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC. North Winona Baptist Church, Winona, Miss., is seeking a full-time minister of music. Please send resume to North Winona Baptist Church, attn: music search committee, 602 Alberta Drive, Winona, MS 38967. Or email to nwbc@duckwood.net.

TWO POSITIONS: CENTRAL BAPTIST Church, Brookhaven, Miss., is accepting resumes for a full-time minister of music/outreach & full-time minister of students/college. Send resumes to 749 N. Jackson Street, Brookhaven, MS



1. Bond Church Bible drillers



2. Coldwater Church Bible drillers

1. **Bond Church, Philadelphia,** recognizes its youth and children's drillers. Youth driller is John Clifton Pope; children's drillers are Courtney Sanderson, Madison Stevens, and Katie Jennings.
2. **Coldwater Church, Philadelphia,** recognizes its children's Bible drillers: Dusty Watkins, Mason Bates, and John Bates.
3. **Harmony Church, Louisville,** recognizes its youth and children's Bible drill teams. Shown are the participants.



3a. Harmony Church Bible drillers



3b. Harmony Church Bible drillers

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COVENANT BAPTIST CHURCH IN Collierville, Tenn., a traditional conservative Southern Baptist Church is now accepting resumes for a full-time minister of education. For further information, see www.covenantontheweb.org. Email resume to office@covenantontheweb.org or mail to Dr. Sam Brassell, Covenant Baptist Church, P.O. Box 1165, Collierville, TN 38027 by June 16, 2008.

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FBC OF RIPLEY, IN WEST TENNESSEE, is seeking a full-time pastor to lead our congregation averaging 240 in Sunday morning worship. Send

resume to FBC, attn: pastor search committee, P.O. Box 23, Ripley, TN 38063 or by email to pastorsearch@fbcirpley.org.

FAITH BAPTIST CHURCH, A CONSERVATIVE Southern Baptist Church in North Alabama, is seeking a man of God to shepherd our congregation in a full time capacity. Seminary degree and experience preferred. Mail resumes to pastor search committee Faith Baptist Church, 3979 CO RD 434, Moulton, AL 35650. Email: fbc-pastorsearch@charterinternet.com.

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Got Bread? Give to World Hunger

By Jimmy Porter, Executive Director
Miss. Baptist Christian Action Comm.

"Obesity costs Mississippi millions" was one of the featured articles in the June 4th edition of The Clarion Ledger. The adult obesity rate for Mississippi in 1991 was more than 15 percent. Now it is 30.6 percent. That is the highest in America. The article suggested obesity cost Mississippi taxpayers \$221 million per year. The national medical bill for obesity is approximately \$93 billion annually.

These figures are staggering and startling, but do not let them deceive you into believing that hunger and malnutrition are non-existent, especially in Mississippi and the rest of the world. The United States Department of Agriculture estimates that 200,000 Mississippi households live with hunger or the threat of hunger on a regular basis.

The leading cause of hunger is poverty and it is here that Mississippi leads all states. The Food Stamps Program, the first line of defense



Porter

against hunger, was used by an average of 275,856 Mississippians per month in the year 2000. This past February over 439,373 individuals received food stamps. The number of users has nearly doubled in the past eight years. This program provides an average of 96 cents per meal per person in each household. The escalating cost of food is taking its toll on thousands of families within this state.

This picture gets worse as we gather data from around the world. Jerry Price, in an article featured by the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, stated that more than 1.2 billion people live below the international poverty level — \$1 per day. One half of all the deaths of children under the age of 5 is caused by hunger and starvation. Ten pre-school children die every minute from malnutrition, a number which has not changed in the past 20 years.

All of us have felt the pinch and the pain at the gas pump and at the grocery market but not like the poorest people on this planet. Rice is the staple food for billions of people and it has more than doubled in price since 2003. Over 2.6 billion people worldwide live on \$2 per day or less. They have been spending half of that on food and now rising costs takes all they earn just to feed themselves and their families. Nothing is left for housing and medical needs. To put this in perspective, if someone took away 95 percent of your annual income and left you with only 5 percent, how would you fare? (www.worldhunger.org)

Less than one month ago a report came from Afghanistan (www.irin-news.org) of a 40-year-old father who sold his 11-year-old daughter, Rabia, for \$2,000 to a man in Sheberghan, a city in northern Afghanistan, to feed his wife and three younger children. He scavenged in garbage cans for leftover food until the numbers of people doing the same got so large that he could not find enough to feed his family. He asked, "How can someone sell

his own child? It's like selling your eyes or selling your heart! I sold her only to buy food for my younger children who otherwise would have died from hunger."

What can you and I do to help? Southern Baptists have been promoting the World Hunger Offering for many years during the month of October. Last year Mississippi Baptists gave nearly \$236,000 to this effort. If we start planning now to give in October, we can serve even more who are in need.

Historically, Baptists have used rice bowls to collect money for World Hunger, but a new and easy approach is to use empty soup cans (family and regular size) with a special soup can label. These labels can be downloaded from www.christianaction.com and copied for churches, small groups, Sunday school classes, families, and children's projects. Go to the home page and select the Resource tab at the top. Then choose Special Emphasis Sundays where you'll find them under the World Hunger section.

Debate on health of SBC continues with resolutions

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP and local reports) — Making a big issue of a one-year decline in the Southern Baptist Convention's total membership number focuses too much on one number and misses the complexity of what is actually going on in Southern Baptist life, says one leading Southern Baptist statistician.

"Too much has been made of the 2007 drop in total membership [.24%, from 16,306,246 to 16,266,920]," said Cliff Tharp, who coordinates collection of the Southern Baptist Convention's Annual Church Profile for LifeWay Christian Resources. "One year does not a trend make. It's a complex reality with numerous factors at work. They interact with each other. It's simplistic to grab onto one and say, 'This is it.'"

In a complicated setting like 21st-century America, many trends in the larger society — changing ethnic makeup, family mobility, the aging of the population, urbanization, resistance to Christianity — affect membership and attendance in churches, Tharp said.

Even what seems to be straightforward analysis of plain numbers may not capture the complexities of what is really going on. "Besides the total membership number, we also report resident membership and average primary worship atten-

dance. People can choose the ones they feel best reflect the reality," Tharp said, "but when you start trying to interpret numbers, things get complicated."

For example, average attendance may not completely reflect the number of people actually involved in a congregation if 25% of the people are there only on the first and third Sundays, while another 25% are there only on the second and fourth.

On top of that, in a highly mobile society like the United States, members who move and join another congregation may be double counted if that second church doesn't inform the original church of the change.

Dishonest numbers?

Is it dishonest for the Southern Baptist Convention to report it has 16 million members when the number of active Southern Baptists may be much lower? No, Tharp says, for at least two reasons.

First, the SBC merely reports the statistics submitted by local churches. "The churches manage their own membership," Tharp said. "The total membership number probably is inflated, but when all is said and done that is a congregational issue. A grassroots change has to come about."

Secondly, the total membership number cannot simply be abandoned because it plays a

vital role in several areas: determining the number of messengers a congregation can have at an annual meeting, providing a means of comparison with other religious groups that use similar measures, offering a measure of the "corporate size" and thus the strength of a church body, and providing continuity with historical measurements of Southern Baptist life that date back to 1845.

Instead of focusing on total membership as an indicator of the Southern Baptist Convention's health, other statistics might be more helpful and provide plenty of cause for concern themselves, Tharp said.

"It concerns me that since 1950 the annual rate of growth of Southern Baptist churches has been declining," Tharp said. "In 1950, we had an annual growth rate of 4.5%; it's less than .5% today."

"When you get down to a growth rate that low, almost anything that happens can take you down for a loss in the total membership number," he added.

Another valuable number is the percentage of churches that are growing, Tharp said. Only about 30% of Southern Baptist congregations are growing; that means about 70% are declining or plateaued. A growing church is one with an increase in total membership of 10% or more over the past five years; a declining

church is one with a decrease in total membership of 10% or more over the past five years; plateaued are those in between.

Baptisms a concern

Of course, for a group that sees evangelism as a defining characteristic of its identity, baptisms are an important indicator, Tharp noted. In 2007, the number of reported baptisms in the Southern Baptist Convention dropped nearly 5.5%, from 364,826 in 2006 to 345,941.

While the number of baptisms reported each year since 1950 have bounced back and forth between 350,000 and 450,000, the overall trend line is flat, Tharp explained.

"We have made effort after effort to increase baptisms, but we haven't seen any real change in 57 years," he said. "That ought to be as much a concern to us as anything."

Accuracy important

David Dockery, president of Union University in Jackson, Tenn., believes in the importance of an accurate church membership roll. He believes a church membership roll that runs two to three times the number of people actually involved is a symptom of a much-deeper problem — one that strikes at the heart of what it means to be a Baptist church and a follower of Jesus.

As Southern Baptists gathered for their annual meeting in Indianapolis earlier this week, three resolutions have been proposed that call for Southern Baptist churches to address the sometimes-great disparity between the number of members they claim and how many members are actually born-again disciples of Jesus Christ. The outcome of the proposed resolutions was not known at The Baptist Record's press deadline.

The debate sometimes focuses on a "total membership" number that has a legitimate statistical value, while the real issue has more to do with who should be accepted into church membership, what expectations should be held up for members and what to do about members who aren't engaged in Jesus' mission in the world, Dockery said.

Over the course of nearly six decades, Southern Baptists have allowed their priorities to gradually shift from Christian faithfulness and spiritual maturity to numerical growth and programmatic efficiency, Dockery said.

Churches need refocus

Without ignoring the importance of numerical growth or efficiency, Southern Baptists "need to refocus on what it means to be a Baptist church, what it means to be a member of a Baptist church," he said.

THE VILLAGE VIEW



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Tamasin, Rebecca, Karen & Family
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Faye McCluer
Dr. & Mrs. Carl S. Bozeman
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Mr. & Mrs. Charles Dew
Kathleen McDaniel
Billy & Lori Barnett
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Colonel Roy McKee
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Mr. & Mrs. Charles Dew
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Basil Nash
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Jr.
Marti Speights
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Mrs. Allyne Statham
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Col. Jimmy Stringer
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James Truesdale
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Mrs. Jean Vines
Chris & Sandra Federick
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Louise Walker
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Moree
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Anna Margaret Zornik
Mr. Jamie A. Cuming III

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

How to Storm-Proof Your Home

Proverbs 23:22-24:4

By Janice H. Fortenberry

Mention "storm" in Mississippi, and most of our thoughts turn back to August 29, 2005, when Hurricane Katrina ripped ashore. We were all stunned at the devastation, and some in Louisiana and Mississippi are still recovering. No one within the storm's reach was left unscathed, and many will bear scars — visible and invisible — for years to come.

As adults, we all want to have a stable home life. Yet, we know that life can change in a split second. These "storms" can come to us as a result of circumstances or from poor choices we make. Regardless, there are very few people who can say their lives haven't been challenged in some respect at one time or another.

The section of Proverbs containing our focal passage (23:17-24:4) is not credited to Solomon but consists of wise sayings nonetheless. While a sharp comparison is drawn between righteousness and wickedness throughout these 30 sayings, it is important to note that choosing Godly wisdom never insulates us from troubles. Rather, Godly wisdom gives us the grace to handle the unavoidable storms of life.

In the first section of the focal passage (23:22-25), we are advised to stay true to the Godly heritage of truth, wisdom, instruction and understanding. For those of us who grew up in Christian homes, this means we should delight in the Godly instruction we receive and pass it on. For those who don't come



Fortenberry

from Godly homes, create them so that we can establish a heritage of stability and hope and Godliness. There are all sorts of reasons why, but verse 25 gives the one most undeniably Southern: It will make Mama proud!

Secondly, we are urged to stay pure (23:26-28). Without a doubt, we are living in one of the most immoral climates in American history. Our culture is saturated with temptations of sexual immorality in the books we read, the television we watch and the music we listen to. The internet has punctured the walls of even the most protective homes and brought the availability of pornography within easy reach.

Christian parents should never underestimate the influence they have on their children's futures by being role models of sexual purity and marital faithfulness.

The third way to "storm-proof" our homes is to stay clearheaded (23:29-35). The focus of these verses is alcohol abuse, and they provide a

graphic description of the effects of drinking too much. In our society, however, there is a host of substances that can be and are abused. In addition to illicit street drugs, there are many who are walking around in a mental fog because of improperly taking or being over-prescribed sedatives, anti-depressants and other anti-anxiety drugs.

When our lives are stressed, we need the ability to think clearly and reason our way through turmoil. Good decisions can never be made when our thinking is clouded in any way.

The final way to guard our homes is to stay wise (24:1-4). "Do not be envious of evil men nor desire to be with them" (24:1 AMS). Believe me, it is easy to look at others at times and wish we had it as good as they. It's even easy to covet the material success of others, especially if we're struggling. However, we are warned not to, mainly because we may not know the full story of how some people accrue their wealth.

I've often said that people's lives are like walking down Main

Street USA in Disney World. What we see are facades. We see what others project and want us to see. What we may find behind many of those pretty trappings is dishonesty, confusion, dread, trouble and personal misery. We need to be careful what we covet.

Instead, we are to fill our homes with priceless treasures (v. 4), such as family harmony, unconditional love, security and good sense. These cannot be bought; they are never listed as assets in a portfolio; but they provide the solid foundation upon which our families thrive.

We have just begun hurricane season, and, for all we know, we may have another big one to contend with in a few days or weeks. So it is with life. Storms are going to come. Just as we need to store bottled water, generators, batteries and canned food in the event of hurricanes or other natural disasters, we need to fill the pantries of our lives with every tool to give us stability and footing when the going gets rough.

Fortenberry is a member of First Church, McComb.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Stephen: Boldness

Acts 6:8-15; 7:51-60

By W. Wayne VanHorn

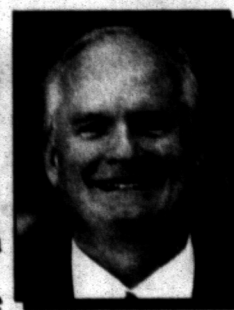
If God's work is going to get done, it will be done by people. Not because people say so, but because God says so. God has chosen not only to save people from sin; he also has chosen to use them to share his life-changing news with others who need him. Over the next five weeks we will examine the lives of five people whom God used in significant ways. Each person exhibits characteristics we can learn from as we do God's work in our own lives. The first person we observe is Stephen. Little is known of his personal life. Our first glimpse of him occurs in Acts 6:5 where he is described as "a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit."

1. Bold in Discussion (Acts 6:8-10)

Stephen loved the Lord and did not care who knew about it. He was empowered by the Spirit to work great wonders and signs among the people. However, he is best known for his ability to outdebate those who disputed with him (Acts 6:9-10). Those who argued with Stephen

were not able to withstand his wisdom and the Spirit with which he spoke.

We should note that Stephen was not an ordained or trained clergy. He was a layman who loved Jesus. By yielding to the leadership and empowerment of the Holy Spirit in his life, Stephen was able to present the Gospel convincingly. People who heard him would either have agreed



VanHorn

with him or viewed him as a threat.

2. Bold Amid Hostility (Acts 6:11-15)

Stephen's effectiveness as a witness for Christ did not go unchallenged. His opponents bribed false witnesses to testify against Stephen to the

Sanhedrin, the ruling council of the Jews. The charges though false were very strong; Stephen was accused of blasphemy against Moses and God (Acts 6:11). His opponents "stirred up the crowd," indicating turmoil based on deceit (Acts 6:12). The false witnesses expanded their charge against Stephen declaring he had spoken against "this place" (the Temple) and "the Law." Stephen probably had declared that Jesus was the fulfillment and therefore the correct focus of worship rather than the Temple (Acts 7:48-50).

In spite of the hostile environment, false witnesses, an agitated crowd, and trumped-up charges, Stephen maintained his

composure. As members of the Sanhedrin observed him closely, his countenance appeared to be that of an angel, probably a reference to his Spirit empowered resolve in the face of overwhelming odds.

3. Bold in Defense (Acts 7:51-53)

Stephen stood before the Sanhedrin presumably to defend himself against false charges. However, he used the opportunity to give a brief account of salvation history (Acts 7:1-50). He then directly accused the religious leaders of resisting the Holy Spirit, and of betraying and murdering Jesus, the Righteous One. He further described them as the ones who received the law from angels but did not keep it. Stephen was emboldened by the Spirit to respond to the false charges against him by declaring true charges against the religious leaders. In this way, he took up the witness of Christ who had stood before this same council facing false charges. As a result of their tes-

timonies to the truth both Jesus and Stephen were killed.

4. Bold to the End (Acts 7:54-60)

Stephen's true charges against the leaders were received with a predictable outrage. They grabbed Stephen, took him out of the city, and stoned him to death. In the midst of the confusion, the Spirit empowered Stephen to see Jesus standing at the right hand of God. Stephen prayed while being stoned. He committed his spirit to the Lord and forgave those who were killing him.

Christians today can experience the same boldness Stephen demonstrated in his life. God empowers believers today to do his work just as he empowered Stephen. May our lives, like Stephen's, be characterized by boldness.

VanHorn is dean of the School of Christian Studies & the Arts at Mississippi College and a member of Morrison Heights Church, Clinton.

Guidelines for submitting news and photographs

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will

be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and

white. Instant photos and digital printouts are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if submitted as a JPEG file via either (a) e-mail, (b) three-and-a-half inch floppy disk, or (c) CD. Photos must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution

items are generally not publishable. Photographs can not be returned. Please do not attach photos with tape or staples.

All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis.

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THE BAPTIST
Record

STATE CHANGES

1. **Park Haven Church, Laurel**, has called **Shane Thrash** as minister of families. He is seen with his wife **Kristel** and son **Kristian**.
2. **First Church, Kosciusko**, has called **Aimee Bradley** as children's minister. Shown are **Bradley** with her husband **Paul**, and children **Jerrold**, **Victoria**, **Daniel**, and **Ben**.



1. Thrash family, Park Haven Church



2. Bradley family, First Church, Kosciusko

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOLS

1. **Slayden Church, Slayden**: Kickoff, Sun., June 15, 6:30 p.m.; June 15 - 19, 8:30 a.m. - noon; commencement, June 22, 6:30 p.m.
2. **Bethel Church, Brandon**: June 16 - 20, 6 - 8:30 p.m.; for information, call (601) 825-5255 or visit www.bethelbaptistms.org.
3. **Bond Church, Philadelphia**: June 16 - 20, 5:30 - 8 p.m., ages 3 - 12.
4. **Bellevue Church, Pontotoc**: June 16 - 20, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.
5. **Tuscola Church, Leake County**: June 17 - 21; Tues. - Fri., 6 - 8:30 p.m.; Sat., 8:30 a.m. - noon; ages 3 yrs. - 6th grade; for information call (601) 267-8509.
6. **New Hope Church, Foxworth**: June 23 - 27; 8:30 - 11:30 a.m.
7. **Ramah Church, McCall Creek**: June 23 - 27, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.; 4 yr. olds - 6th grade.

JUST FOR THE RECORD

1. The children's mission groups of **Union Church**, collected school supplies for the **Children's Haven** in Mexico. Shown are the participants and leaders.
2. **Dumas Church, Dumas** held a baby dedication on Mother's Day. Shown are **Corey**, **Casey**, and **Caden Hargett**; **Scotty**, **Tiffany**, and **Caleb Hatcher**; and **Megan**, **Adam**, and **Tucker Hargett**.



1. Union Church missions groups

1. The **Carey Dinner Theatre of William Carey University** will present **Smoke on the Mountain Homecoming**, 7 p.m., June 12 - 28 at the **Hattiesburg** campus. Tickets are \$25 and include buffet meal, program book, and show. Reservations available at (601) 318-6221.
2. **Bill and Jill Baker** have provided a scholarship at **Blue Mountain College** for students who intend to pursue a career in full-time Christian vocational ministry, with preference being given to students from **Pontotoc County**.



1. Smoke on the Mountain Homecoming



2. Jill and Bill Baker

3. **Carol Jones**, director of psychology and counseling at **William Carey University**, was elected chair of the **Mississippi State Board of Examiners for Licensed Professional Counselors** after being confirmed by the **Mississippi Senate** in her appointment by **Gov. Barbour** in May.
4. The 14th annual **Communicator Awards** honored **Mississippi College** fine arts graduate **Jennifer Dyess**, a **Brandon** resident, with its **Award of Distinction** in the overall design category. Her **Winner's Challenge Brochure** was recently printed by **Hederman Brothers Printers of Ridgeland**.



2. Dumas Church, Dumas, baby dedication

Visit us online at www.mbc.org, to learn about all Mississippi Baptist mission opportunities.